Ambassadors in Action

Spring 2003 Edition

It's spring and time for the third edition of *Ambassadors in Action*. Have a look through the newsletter to keep yourself up-to-date on what's been happening and what's new, and to hear from individuals who contributed articles that share their experiences and insights with us.

What's Been Happening?

- The Ambassador Toolkit is now available online. Check it out at www.pao.gov.ab.ca/staff/ambassador/index.html

- "Do you hire people with a Science degree?" is an example of a typical question Ambassadors hear at career fairs. To help you respond to these types of inquiries, Lead Ambassadors have developed a cross-government reference - *Who Do Ministries Hire?* – that outlines the educational backgrounds ministries typically hire. You can find this document in the Ambassador Toolkit, "Cross-Government Resource Information" section.

- Ambassadors were invited to attend the launch of new tools to market the Alberta public service; it was great to see that some Ambassadors were able to make it to the session. To update those who didn't make the session, highlights of the launch information were e-mailed to all Ambassadors in late March.

- Ambassadors from several ministries recently visited the Metis Nation of Alberta Employment Services Centre in Edmonton. They mingled with the centre's clients to promote the Alberta public service as an attractive employer, and to answer any questions they might have. Ambassadors were also able to network with staff to explore future opportunities for their Ministry to partner with the Metis Nation of Alberta.

- We provided packages of Alberta public service marketing materials to the University of Lethbridge, for distribution at their Native Awareness Week activities.

- Several Ambassadors attended the annual "Meet and Greet" organized by the Grant MacEwan Human Resources Management Student Society, which provides students with an opportunity to network with HR professionals.

A day in the life of a job searching business student

The Grant MacEwan Student Business Conference

By **Siân Swinnerton**
Strategic Human Resource Advisor, Sustainable Resource Development

Each year Grant MacEwan College hosts an Annual Student Business Conference for students in business administration. Approximately 300 students, whose interests lie in human resources, international relations, accounting, insurance, and IT, take a day from classes to listen to speakers and partake in roundtable sessions. It is an excellent opportunity for students to connect with industry leaders and find out what career opportunities await them.

As an alumnus of the human resource program, I had the opportunity to participate in the roundtable sessions, acting as a representative of the public service. Having attended this conference as a student in the past it was interesting to play the role of an industry leader. Over 60 companies were present to spend four 20-minute rotations with students. In essence, it was a sit down career fair.

I had brought with me a variety of promotional material on the public service, the Intern Program, and human resources. Anticipating an overwhelming crowd of people at my roundtable I was surprised to see how few people sat at the table and how many students bee-lined toward the big global companies, such as IBM, A-Channel, and Petro-Canada.

To my relief the chair of the HR Program began encouraging students to visit the public service table. I discussed with them the internship program, the structure of the public service, and the wealth of departments to work with, the attractive benefits, and career pathing opportunities. I found that 20 minutes was the perfect length of time to explain why the public service is an excellent "company" to work with. I found that after the first rotation those students were recommending their friends to visit the "public service" table.

What I learned from this experience, which I think is of value to all Ambassadors, is that the old image of government still exists, yet Ambassadors promoting the public service can quickly dispel those myths. Students mentioned that they heard it was hard to find a job in government, that once you are in you are there for life, and that there are not as many perks and competitive salaries as there are in private industry. By the end of the roundtable students were extremely keen to work with the public service. They were amazed at the opportunities, the various careers in different departments, the benefits, and the learning and wellness support.

As the Ambassador Program continues to grow and we are increasingly visiting schools and promoting career opportunities, the word will inevitably be shared that the public service is an attractive place to work. As I experienced at the Grant MacEwan Student Business Conference, once we harness the attention of prospective employees their interest in government as an employer of choice quickly follows.

Work Experience Programs – A Win/Win Situation for Students and the APS

By Kathy Stachniak

You may recall that our Winter 2003 Ambassadors in Action newsletter included an article on a presentation by Ambassadors to Management Studies Program students at Grant MacEwan. I wanted to share with you an article from Kathy, one of the students who subsequently approached the Personnel Administration Office (PAO) about completing her field placement with us. Kathy was a valuable contributor and active team member – she was a tremendous help and offered a fresh perspective for us. And as demonstrated in her article below, work experience programs are an excellent opportunity for the APS to introduce students to the interesting work and supportive environment we offer, and encourage them to share their positive experience with fellow students when they return to school. Thank you Kathy for all your help and for contributing an article for our newsletter.

- Kerri Schlemko

As a graduating student of the Management Studies program at Grant MacEwan College, I recently had the opportunity to attend an information session on the Alberta public service. The Ambassadors that visited the college provided us with some very valuable information. As students who will be entering the workforce in the near future, we were able to gain insight on a few of the various departments that the public service includes, as well as the many opportunities that are available for recent graduates, such as the Intern and Co-Op programs.

I found that the information session was very informative and interesting, so when I was posed with the challenge of finding an organization to complete my three-week fieldwork placement, I found the Alberta public service to be a favourable option. I am currently finishing the last week of my fieldwork placement with the Personnel Administration Office. Throughout this time, I have worked on projects in several areas such as Service Excellence, internship programs, classification and

recruitment. I was also given the opportunity to attend several meetings within the Personnel Administration Office to gain a better understanding of what the organization as a whole is currently working on.

Overall, my time working at the Personnel Administration Office has been an unforgettable learning experience. My goal coming into my field placement was to gain a better understanding about the different facets involved in human resources. I feel that I have not only achieved this goal, but I have also been exposed to a working environment that is supportive and empowering. I have learned that there are so many opportunities available for new graduates, such as myself, in the Alberta public service, and I believe that it would be an excellent place to begin a career. In my short time working at PAO, it has become quite apparent to me how much the Alberta public service values its employees by offering challenging and diverse work, as well as ongoing opportunities for growth, development and advancement.

I would welcome any opportunity to work for the Alberta public service again, but for now I am happy to say that through my experience here, I have gained confidence and knowledge that I am sure will be valuable to me in the future wherever my career may take me.

Did You Know?

- We have recently introduced an updated competency model for the Alberta public service.

  Competencies are: any attitude, skill, behaviour, motive or other personal characteristic that is essential to perform a job, or more importantly, differentiate superior performers from solid performers.

  - Alberta Public Service Competency Model

  The model identifies and defines our competencies, and also describes behaviours at different levels of the competency. So it can be a great source of information to reference in your Ambassador role when you're speaking to potential future employees who want more information about what we're looking for when we hire, develop and recognize/reward our staff. Check it out at www.pao.gov.ab.ca/learning/competencies/apscomp/index.html.

- "Are you hiring summer staff?" This is a common question Ambassadors hear, and there's a new resource you can mention when you're answering this question. Some ministries are choosing to profile their summer jobs in the "Information for Students and Graduates" part of the Alberta government's employment website (http://www.jobs.alberta.ca/students/work-experience.htm). There may not always be jobs posted, but it is one more reference source you can let potential employees know about in addition to the usual sources mentioned (Bulletin Online; postings at campus career resource centres; or directly contacting the various human resource offices of individual ministries).

We Want to Hear From You!

We're interested in your thoughts and ideas! If you have feedback on the newsletter, if you would like to become involved with the regular production of the newsletter, or if you have an article you would like to contribute, please contact kerri.schlemko@gov.ab.ca.